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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 000523

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SUBJECT: GENERAL WALD AND SADC SEC GEN DISCUSS SADC'S NEW REGIONAL RESPONSE FORCE

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph Huggins for Reasons 1.4 B and D

11. (C) Summary. Meeting with SADC Secgen Prega Ramsamy in Gaborone April 13, General Charles Wald explained how the U.S. could assist the African Union (AU) and its regional components, including SADC, to equip, train, organize and support the new Regional Responses Forces (RRFs). General Wald and BGen Thomas Verbeck emphasized the importance of linking the new SADC RRF,s communications to the AU in Addis Ababa, saying the U.S. was ready to help, just as we had with ECOWAS. Ramsamy agreed to send SADC planners to ECOWAS to see how the U.S. had assisted. He also volunteered that Botswana had agreed to provide C-130s for the new RRF. Mission will follow up with SADC military planners on the details. End summary.

12. (SBU) Ambassador Huggins, Gen. Wald,s senior team, and DCM (notetaker) also attended the meeting. On the new RRF,s and U.S. offers of help, Ramsamy said SADC was already preparing an Early Warning Center in Gaborone and setting up the new SADC Standby Force as a brigade. Planning for a June exercise for this SADC RRF was underway. The Organ, which would decide how to interact with donors, was currently reviewing a draft Strategic Plan which SADC would share with the U.S.

13. (SBU) Ramsamy explained that the new RRF would train at SADC,s Regional Peacekeeping Training Center in Zimbabwe, but its planning section would operate from Gaborone. The planning section currently consists of Organ members South Africa, Namibia, and Lesotho, as well as Botswana. While it may be the Organ that will decide on donor assistance, Ramsamy requested help with the facilities in Harare. He said rotating instructors would offer the training three times a year, with only a small resident contingent. The German government,s GTZ is currently funding the training.

14. (SBU) Responding to General Wald,s question, Ramsamy said SADC was seeking to build its joint exercises capacity. Computers to link the RRF with Addis and other early warning systems such as those maintained by think tanks would be appreciated. SADC Defense Ministers have already formed a committee to study peace and stability issues. As to establishing the brigade, Ramsamy had a list of countries with the proposed contributions of each.

15. (U) A SADC colleague said the brigade would form part of an AU force that could participate in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). The AU and UN would provide the mandate. The force would be able to deploy within 14 days minimum. The official said SADC would pay the troops, based on a memorandum between SADC and members on the one hand and between the AU and the regional groupings on the other. Answering General Wald, the official noted that the U.S. had attended the meeting in Addis where this issue was discussed and that North Africa did not yet have a regional force. General Wald observed, however, that the U.S. is already training several North African countries which will be ready to join such a force once constituted.

16. (SBU) In response to further queries about how the U.S. could assist, Ramsamy asserted that SADC wants to be in command and will state the kind of assistance it wants. He accepted General Wald,s offer, however, to send four military planners to visit ECOWAS, perhaps in May, to see how it has organized. General Wald said he would also be in Senegal in May. He mentioned that the Special Operations Command Exercises in June in Senegal would involve 10 countries outside Africa. General Wald told Ramsamy that he had emphasized to President Mogae the need to contribute experienced military planners to the AU force.

17. (SBU) BGen Verbeck outlined how the U.S. could assist SADC to establish a wide area network. He described operation African Endeavor, saying Botswana and South Africa had already observed it. He suggested that the exercise could help SADC know how and what to share. He urged SADC to support this initiative this year so that SADC could participate in 2006. He also mentioned that the U.S. has a clearinghouse on military cooperation with other countries, 20 of whom met recently in Garmisch. Ramsamy replied that he must report to the committee in charge of the brigade before making any detailed commitments.

18. (C) Ramsamy detailed some of the proposed contributions for the brigade without mentioning the donor countries. Pressed further on the need for airlift, Ramsamy volunteered that Botswana had committed to provide C-130 support for the RRF. He stressed further that previous experience of SADC in DRC and Lesotho had led SADC to be cautious. He expressed his trust in the U.S. and assured General Wald that SADC would go to ECOWAS to see how we had assisted there. General Wald expressed his satisfaction with that decision.

19. (C) Comment: Ramsamy, being a lame duck and at the mercy of SADC members, is not usually very forthcoming. We were struck, therefore, by his saying that Botswana had proposed to contribute C-130 support to the RRF, something President Mogae had not mentioned in his meeting with General Wald. Our DATT and ODC Chief, for whom Mission will seek accreditation by SADC, will follow up with SADC's military planners on these issues.

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